DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 992 SP 041 057

TITLE	The Best of Works4Me: Winning Tips from Classroom Teachers. NEA Checklist Series.
INSTITUTION	National Education Association, Washington, DC.
ISBN	ISBN-0-8106-2161-4
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	59p.
AVAILABLE FROM	NEA Professional Library, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 800-229-4200 (Toll Free); Web site: http://www.nea.org/books.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	*Classroom Techniques; *Computer Uses in Education; Discipline; *Educational Technology; Elementary Secondary Education; Internet; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Student Behavior; Student Motivation; Teacher Collaboration; Teacher Student Relationship; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*Organizational Skills; Paperwork

ABSTRACT

This book presents a collection of tips focused around six themes. In "Teaching Techniques," teachers share ways in which they have increased their effectiveness and enhanced their interaction with students. "Content" provides methods of delivering art, science, reading, and other subjects in ways that will inspire and motivate students. "Getting Organized" tackles the time drain related to paperwork, offering ways to creatively organize paperwork and materials so that teachers can spend more time on students. "Managing Your Classroom" provides tips to help teachers strike the right balance between freedom and discipline to achieve a well-run classroom. "School Relationships" presents tips on working collaboratively with parents, colleagues, and a range of other individuals to build a strong network of support. In "Using Technology," teachers share ways the have used digital photography, the Internet, and other tools to improve student learning. Next to each tip is a small checkbox for marking off effective suggestions. (SM)

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The Best of Works 4 Me: Winning Tips from Classroom Teachers

National Education Association
2000

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The best of Works4Me

Winning Tips from Classroom Teachers

Great ideas from NEA's wildly popular weekly E-mail service. Works4Me topics include:

- ☑ Teaching Techniques
- ☑ Content
- ☑ Getting Organized
- ☑ Managing Your Classroom
- ☑ School Relationships
- ☑ Using Technology

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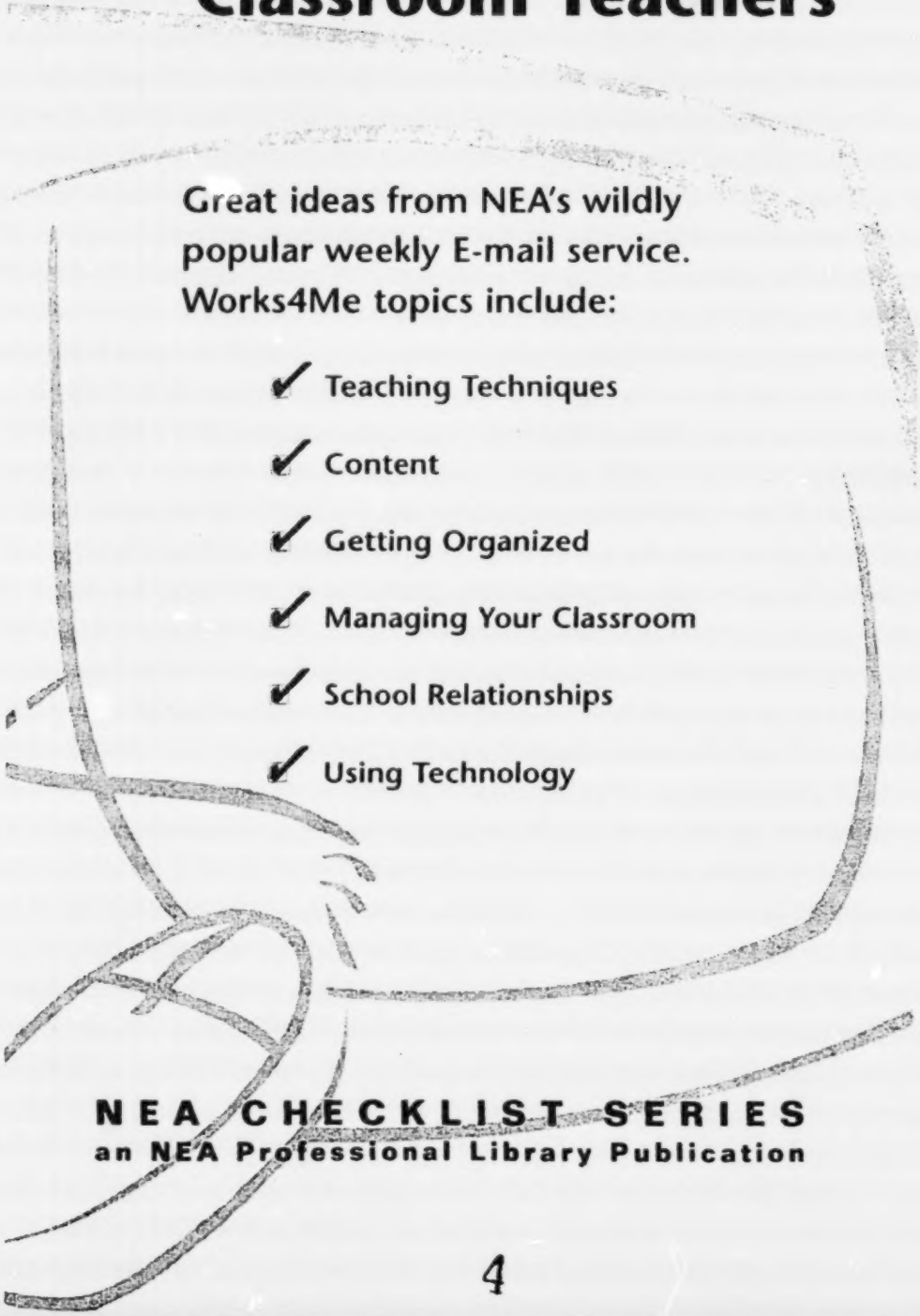

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NEA CHECKLIST SERIES
an NEA Professional Library Publication

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Printing History:
First Printing: June 2000

Note: The opinions in this publication should not be construed as representing the policy or position of the National Education Association. Materials published by the NEA Professional Library are intended to be discussion documents for educators who are concerned with specialized interests of the profession.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Works4me : practical classroom tips from your colleagues.
p. cm. — (NEA checklist series)
ISBN 0-8106-2161-4 (alk. paper)
1. Teaching. 2. Teaching—Aids and devices. I. Title: Worksfourme. II. Title: Works 4 me. III. Title: Practical classroom tips from your colleagues. IV. NEA Professional Library (Association) V. National Education Association of the United States. VI. Series.
LB1025.3 .W67 2000
371.102—dc21

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes the little things make a big difference. *Works4Me: Winning Tips from Classroom Teachers* is a collection of little things—tips from your colleagues around the country—that add up to more effective, less stressful teaching.

From suggestions on helping absent students catch up on work to reinforcing writing skills to reducing unnecessary trips to the rest room, you'll learn some great, practical ideas culled from NEA's popular Works4Me Tips Library.

Works4Me has created a true community of teachers across grade levels and subject areas, sharing concrete strategies that can be used in the classroom the very next day. Teachers who don't normally feel they have anything in common are finding they can benefit from the advice of their peers. Many educators have shared the sentiments of the high school teacher who said, "I never expected to learn teaching strategy from a kindergarten teacher, but I have and I thank you!"

Want to benefit from more tips? Sign up for Works4Me, and you will automatically receive an E-mail message every week with a practical classroom tip. For a free subscription, and to comb the Works4Me archive for other tips, visit (http://helpfrom.nea.org).

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

This book is a collection of tips around six main themes: Teaching Techniques, Content, Getting Organized, Managing Your Classroom, School Relationships, and Using Technology. Read the book from cover to cover, or sample ideas here and there. You'll find suggestions that you will put to use the next time you step foot in your classroom!

In **Teaching Techniques,** teachers share ways they've increased their effectiveness and enhanced their interaction with students.

In **Content,** you'll find methods of delivering art, science, reading, and other subjects in ways that will excite and inspire your students.

Getting Organized tackles that time drain we all face: paperwork. Here are ways to creatively organize paperwork and materials so that you can spend more time doing what's really important.

You'll find tips in **Managing Your Classroom** that will help you strike the right balance between freedom and discipline to achieve a well-run classroom.

School Relationships with parents, colleagues, and a range of other individuals need attention, too. Read through this section for tips on working and communicating well with others to build a strong network of support.

In **Using Technology**, teachers share ways they have used digital photography, the Internet, and other tools to improve student learning.

Next to each tip is a small checkbox. Mark off the tips that you find especially effective or that you would like to share with others. Make Works4Me work for you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NEA would like to thank all of the wonderful teachers who've taken the time and energy to contribute their great ideas to the Works4Me Tips Library.

We would especially like to thank Pam Abruzzo, Susan Olesen, Kathryn DeCola, and John Failor, the four teachers who actually choose the tips and publish the Works4Me newsletter. Pam Abruzzo serves double duty as the Works4Me Coordinator who posts the tips on the Web site and communicates with the "tipsters" and state education associations.

Without all of the dedicated teachers who continue to share their time, knowledge, and expertise, Works4Me could not exist.

Webster's defines teaching as, "to cause to know a subject." All too brief—a universe of teaching and learning lies behind those lines! As every educator knows, it's the 1001 little things you do every day that define good teaching. Following are techniques used by real teachers to increase their effectiveness and enhance their interaction with students.

"Real teachers consider their teaching a gift they give to their students—a gift that can change the course of their students' lives forever."

Patti Ralabate

Me in a Bag

At the beginning of the year, I introduce myself using "Me In A Bag." I put a few items that represent me in a large paper sack. In my sack, I put a paintbrush because I'm an artist, my favorite book, my favorite food, pictures of my family and my pets, my favorite CD, and a cookbook.

The children sit around me, and I explain the significance of each item as I pull it out of the bag. This discussion helps the kids get to know me as a person. Each child then has a turn to bring in his/her own "Me In A Bag," giving everyone in the class a chance to shine.

Jan Formisano, Second grade teacher
Thomas Jefferson Elementary School
Falls Church, Virginia
(janformisano@email.msn.com)

Personalized Plates

The first assignment I give each school year is to have my students describe themselves in eight or fewer letters and/or numbers. I give them a license plate template and tell them that they need to create a personal plate that best describes an important aspect of their character. They decorate their plates and explain why their choice of letters or numbers fits them. I post the plates around the room so they get to see what their classmates say about themselves. The license plates are always a big hit at parent open house.

Sue Schmitt, English teacher
Antioch Community High School
Antioch, Illinois
(sschmitt@achs.lake.k12.il.us)

Balloons-R-Us

I teach a program called Freshman Academy. This program takes 30 to 40 freshmen who haven't demonstrated very high academic proficiency and tries to get them caught up in reading and

mathematics. I lead these students in running a school store called Balloons-R-Us. Balloons-R-Us allows students to purchase balloons at school for their friends' birthdays. We use the front of a janitorial closet as a store. We are open every morning before school and provide a selection of around fifteen different balloons. Included with each balloon are helium, ribbon, and a weight. Freshman Academy students work at the store, help select inventory, create advertising and marketing strategies, and complete financial records. We have made a profit of $500 so far this year. We plan to do a year-end report and decide what to do with the profits. I have incorporated some of the math involved in the business in my math classes. I believe any school could operate such a business.

John Failor, Math teacher
Maine West High School
Des Plaines, Illinois
(daograce@aol.com)

Teaching Thinking Skills

I gather puzzlers and problems from the Internet, middle-school math magazines, old textbooks, and other publications. Each day, I put a challenging problem on the overhead and give my students time to work on the problem. When I call "time," I place a small square of tag board on the desks of those who got the correct answer. The students write their names on the squares and place them in a can. I draw out one name and that student has to explain the method he or she used to get the correct answer. The student receives a prize for a good explanation. Then, I ask for other students to share their explanations. The students benefit from having to explain their thinking processes and from seeing multiple methods of solving problems. I am amazed at the variety of methods they use to reach solutions.

Susan Reid
Seventh & eighth grade algebra teacher
Olive Branch Middle School
Olive Branch, Mississippi
(Susabella4@aol.com)

Free Stuff from the Armed Services

I go to the armed services recruiting offices and ask for book covers and pencils. They are usually glad to oblige. They have other free things for classrooms, too. I use the free pencils as rewards for 100% scores on tests.

Lois Barreto, Third grade teacher
Peace Lutheran School
Detroit, Michigan
(ggblib@gateway.net)

Ringing in the New Year

In order to maintain effective classroom management upon returning to school after winter recess, I review and discuss school and classroom rules and behavior expectations. By reviewing class rules and routines, students are gently moved back into the swing of the school day. Students work in cooperative learning groups and create collages of favorite gifts or favorite moments from the break. Rather than "clamping down" or "getting tough" on kids, I take advantage of their energy and excitement at the New Year and use it to my advantage! Students enjoy the activities, and I am sometimes surprised at the results!

Janine P. Riggins, Second grade teacher
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., School Complex
Atlantic City, New Jersey
(J9Rig@aol.com)

Mother's and Father's Day Gift

My students save one favorite art project each month. These are glued onto a computer-generated calendar. I duplicate the months on white art paper, add a cover for the kids to decorate, and bind the pages together with the school's bookbinding machine. The calendar runs from May to the following April, so that it can be used immediately. As they flip the pages up, there is a place to glue the next piece of artwork on the back of the previous month. I trim

down the paper the students use as the background for each project so that there is a naturally framed edge around it. This calendar provides a nice gift for parents and also showcases the students' art work throughout the entire year.

Gaye Pesout, Third grade teacher
Kanesville Elementary School
West Haven, Utah
(Gpesout@aol.com)

Cemetery Studies

We're going to do *what*? That used to be the first thing out of my students' mouths when I told them that we'd be going on a field trip to the cemetery. Now it has become an anticipated tradition for my students. Even students from my past classes have begged me to take them there again. Check out the Web site (http://www.angelfire.com/ky2/cemetery) to find cemetery lesson plans in all subject matters.

Linda Prather, Eighth grade teacher
Silver Grove School
Silver Grove, Kentucky
(traveler@who.net)

Spongy Vocabulary Review

To review vocabulary in any subject, take strips of masking tape and tape them to a rectangular sponge. Use a marker to write the vocabulary words on the tape. Have the students toss the sponge around the room to other students. The words that get chosen can depend on which finger is touching a particular part of the sponge. For example, if a student's left finger lands on a specific word, that is the word he or she must try to define. Students love this game. If there are more than six vocabulary words, just tape over already defined words and write the new words on top.

Luke Verna, Fifth grade teacher
Upper Perkiomen Middle School
East Greenville, Pennsylvania
(tlverna@netreach.net)

After-School Video Experience

It is often difficult to find class time to view some of the excellent documentaries and videos relating to historical topics taught in class, so I encourage my students to attend an afterschool video experience. Together we view with a critical eye, we analyze historical and literary content, and we evaluate the importance of the video itself. This is all done in a relaxed atmosphere complete with popcorn. Students not only gain historical insight, but they also earn bonus points.

Cathy Priest, American experience teacher
Perry High School
Perry, Ohio
(priestc@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Jeopardy Review

We created a template in PowerPoint that works like the *Jeopardy* game show. All the teacher has to do is create original questions and answers and type them in on the corresponding slides. Easy questions go in the hundred-point row and harder questions go in the five hundred-point row. Clicking a link will bring up a question, clicking again will bring up the answer, and clicking on a picture of the principal will take the player home to the main screen. This game is a tremendous review process for kids. The template can be freely downloaded at (http://www.magicnet.net/~itms/jeopardy/index.htm). An example created by Pam can be seen at (http://www.magicnet.net/~itms/jeopardy/health /index.htm).

Mark Geary and **Pam Mason**
Math, science, and technology coordinator
and curriculum specialist
Sanford Middle School
Sanford, Florida
(Mark_Geary@scps.k12.fl.us)

Great Grade Chain

I give my students an opportunity to show their great grades in the classroom. At the beginning of the year, I give them a different color construction paper to use as their link color. For every test or project grade that reflects "A" work, both in my classroom and in their other classes, the students cut a strip of their color paper, write the subject and the grade on it, and staple it to the previous link. Along with the link added to the "Chain of Great Grades," the students are entitled to select a reward from the reward jar. As the year goes on, the chain becomes longer. I love to look up and see our great grades hanging around.

Lisa Skain
Upper level special education teacher
Somerdale Park School
Somerdale, New Jersey
(Geminmay@aol.com)

Practice Interviews

We give students the opportunity to experience a formal interview. Faculty and peers interview students interested in becoming a peer leader, asking about their strengths, weaknesses, and reasons for wanting to work with middle school personalities each week. To evaluate their judgment, we ask them to respond to a hypothetical situation. Seniors who are interested in scholarships from community organizations are interviewed at school on a Saturday by faculty and community organization representatives. Our business and guidance departments cooperate to offer mock college and job interviews during the school day. Students submit a portfolio of their work, including a cover letter, resume, grades, and awards. After the interview, students receive an evaluation of their interview through their business teacher.

Peggy Hanselman, Counselor
New Hope Solebury High School
New Hope, Pennsylvania

Oral Presentations

I taught my students how to create a PowerPoint presentation, and I let them make one on a topic of their choice. After scripting and practicing their speeches, my reluctant public speakers gave excellent presentations to their classmates. PowerPoint proved to be a powerful motivator!

Pamela Martin
Fifth through eighth grade
special education teacher
Perry Middle School
Perry, Ohio
(MartinP@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Setting Goals

I started a "Raise Your Grades Club" for the third through fifth graders at our school. After each report card, students chart their grades and set goals for their next report card. The students that wish to participate write me a letter telling me which grades they will raise and how. After the next report card, the students who have met their specific goal(s) are invited to a celebration. This club not only recognizes what students are doing right but teaches achievable goal setting.

Barbara Teetor, Achievement specialist
Tyrone Elementary
St. Petersburg, Florida
(bteetor@prodigy.net)

CONTENT

From art to science, from reading to geography, content is the meat and potatoes of teaching and learning. These tips are designed to help you deliver content creatively and effectively, and to excite your students about the subjects they're learning.

"Real teachers inform store management when handwritten signs have spelling errors."

Ellen McCormack

Booktalks

My class has a "Booktalk" once a month to share their favorite pieces of writing and to increase the interest level in reading good pieces of literature. The Booktalks are very informal. The children sit in a circle and bring a copy of their favorite book. In just a few minutes, they share the author and illustrator, their favorite part of the book, the book's category (fiction, nonfiction, mystery, etc.) and whom they think would like to read this type of book. Last, each child makes a visual, such as a 3-D model or a poster, to retell one of the events of the story. The children love listening to one another, and I have noticed that they often read the books that are recommended.

Dana Salamone, Fourth grade teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(salamoned@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Novel Bookmarks

My students have difficulty with comprehension and sequential events when reading novels. They use an index card marked with the chapter they're reading as their bookmark. On the card, they jot down one or two sentences about the chapter, any difficult words, and the characters they met. This only takes a few minutes because it is done when the chapter is fresh in their minds. We continue this throughout the book and keep our bookmarks together with elastic. At the end of the book, we read the cards as a review. This is a great way to keep track of sequential happenings and write up a book summary. (I borrowed this idea from my daughter who thought of this when she was in the sixth grade.)

Dolly Charpentier
Seventh and eighth grade L.D. teacher
Samoset Middle School
Leominster, Massachusetts
(THECHARPS@aol.com)

Poetry Reading

I never mention the word poetry when I start this unit. We start with prescription poetry. Everyone must write their name, two adjectives, two adverbs, and then their name again. Everyone is a poet, as they have written poems that are uniquely theirs. Next we write about family members. Then we find poetry in the library that high school students can relate to, and we study poetic musical lyrics. After that, we move into the classics of Frost, Whitman, Emerson, and others. Once the students have gained a real understanding of poetry, we set up the library with refreshments, candles, and a microphone to have our own poetry reading. All of my students get the chance to read some of their poetry, and I invite some music students to join in the fun. Our poetry reading really excites my students. Poetry becomes palatable and enjoyable.

Jan Fogel, Literature teacher
De Pere High School
De Pere, Wisconsin
(budjanfogel@juno.com)

Constructing Geometrical Forms

For an engaging and dramatic geometry unit, my students construct large models out of tightly rolled newspaper struts. The struts must be clipped at the ends where they are weakest and it's best to use full format newspapers and roll them tightly from corner to corner. I use masking tape to make the connections. I've been able to construct tetrahedral prisms and 3-D Sierpinsky prisms up to eight feet high. Making measurements of height, slant height, and base area is a challenging and interesting problem that makes the study of surface area and volume more of an active, concrete exercise.

Joe Cooley, Geometry teacher
Trenton Central High School
Trenton, New Jersey
(Jcooley185@aol.com)

Floor Circles

When teaching parts of a circle, pi, area, and circumference, I use a tool we all have readily available. . . the floor! I use washable overhead markers and draw a large circle, which covers about 1/3 of my floor. I tape a piece of string to the center of the floor and tie the marker to the other end, which works as a compass to make a perfect circle. I draw the diameter, a radius, and a chord. My students "walk" each part as we define them. To understand pi, the students walk the diameter and the circumference of the circle. Then we count their steps. Once we display the data on a chart, it's easy to see that the walk around the circle took about three times as many steps as the walk across the circle. I find that kids don't forget what pi means, since they literally walked it!

Pam Luckenbaugh, Sixth grade math teacher,
Herbert Hoover Middle School
Edison, New Jersey
(Math6Tchr@aol.com)

Percentage of Water

Here's an activity that I use when we discuss the percentages of water and land on the earth and when we discuss water content of the human body and the foods we eat. I bring in a slice of bread, a carrot, an apple, popped popcorn, a potato, celery, an orange, and a banana. We make a seven-column chart to record our data. The column headings include food, estimated and actual fresh weight, estimated and actual dried weight, difference and percentage of water. We estimate, weigh, slice, dry, and re-weigh each food. Last, we graph the fresh and dried weights on a bar or line graph and the students write a summary of their findings.

Golda Condron, Fourth grade teacher
Ochoco Elementary School
Prineville, Oregon
(golda@empnet.com)

Feeding Fish

Setting up a fish tank provides great enrichment in a classroom. Although I attempt to make the students responsible for feeding the fish, I find they can often be heavy-handed in giving the pets just a pinch of food. My solution was to purchase a pill reminder box that has separate lidded compartments labeled for each day of the week. I fill each day with the exact amount of food necessary and place it next to the tank. A student helper opens that day's compartment and feeds the fish. I can easily check to see if the fish have been fed, I'm certain of the amount, and every student gets a turn at feeding.

Cynthia Bordash, Sixth grade science teacher,
Stanton Middle School
Hammondsville, Ohio
(BORDASH@prodigy.net)

Smack It!

Here's a fun way to review vocabulary. Write a variety of vocabulary words all over the board. Divide the class into two teams and choose one representative from each team to come up to the board. Give them a fly swatter with which they are to "smack" the correct vocabulary word upon the teacher's prompting. Whoever smacks first wins a point for their team. Prompts may be English translations, complete the sentence, opposites, synonyms, or any other creative question the teacher can make up. This game gets the kids moving! In the event the "smackers" don't know the answer, the other students (who have been paying close attention) have an opportunity to answer it for the point!

Tina Matic, Spanish teacher
Oxford Academy
Cypress, California
(tina@aztecas.com)

Pumpkin Geography

During the month of October, my students use pumpkins for hands-on lessons. After becoming familiar with the location of the seven continents and the major bodies of water, each student is given a pumpkin to turn into a globe. Students paint the entire surface of the pumpkin blue to represent water. Next, they use pushpins to position and trace the outline of each continent onto their pumpkins. They use actual globes as models and are careful to place the continents in the correct hemisphere. Then, they paint and label each continent a different color. They label the major bodies of water and use white paint to represent the North and South Poles. While they work on their globes, I take pictures using a digital camera. We complete this project by importing the pictures and adding text on the computer to make a class book titled "Pumpkin Geography," which we all enjoy enormously. To see the finished products, please go to this NEA web site: (http://www.nea.org/helpfrom/growing/works4me/content/pumpkins.html).

Cherise Croff, Third grade teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(croffc@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Beach Ball Toss

To give my students a sense of the proportions of the earth that are land and water, we toss a beach ball that's decorated as the globe. These are available at low cost. As students catch the ball, they must report whether their hands land on earth or on water. I keep track of it on the board. After every child has a turn, we tally up the results. Surprisingly, this works successfully. As an extension, the student can call out the name of the continent on which their hand lands.

Carol Berlin, Third grade teacher
Charlotte A. Dunning School
Framingham, Massachusetts
(c.berlin@rcn.com)

Children's Handprints

I use children's handprints each month for a different activity. The handprints can be used for monthly calendar tops, keepsake books, etc. We all know about the hand turkey, but how about a hand ghost or a hand Santa? To make a ghost, have the children put their hand upside down with the three middle fingers together and their pinky and thumb out for hands. To make a hand Santa, they put their hand upside down, spread their fingers for the beard and use their thumb to make the tassel of the hat. During my ocean unit, I paint their hand but not their thumb and do two prints on top of each other to make an octopus. The children come up with their own fun and creative handprint ideas, too!

Sally Murphy, Kindergarten teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(murphys@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Class History Book

I bring in the newspaper from home every day until I have six days' worth. I divide my class into groups and ask them to find an article with an international dateline, another state's dateline, and a dateline from our state. They staple these on an 8 x 11 inch piece of paper. Each group briefly tells the rest of the class about its articles. I fill in information, and we file them. Each month, I redistribute the month's pages and we narrow the articles down to the best six. We post these on the board and the students vote on which ones to keep. At the end of the school year, we'll have twelve news pages for a class history book.

Joanne Goodrich, Fifth grade teacher
Deadwood Elementary School
Deadwood, South Dakota
(gjgdrich@mato.com)

Window Shade Charts

I like to use a word wall to introduce new words to my students. I have limited space in my classroom, so I make my word charts on old window shades that can be pulled down during writing times. Frayed edges on the shades can be covered with colorful tape that will also draw the children's attention.

Kristine Furkey, First grade ESL teacher
Morgan Elementary School
Holyoke, Massachusetts
(KAF48@aol.com)

Newspaper Test

Several times a year, I buy enough newspapers for my entire class. I draft a test that requires them to use the table of contents on the front of the paper to find the answers quickly. I include questions for everyone: where movies are showing, used cars for sale, exchange rates, the weather, etc. This exercise helps students become familiar with the paper and demonstrates its usefulness.

D. Bruce Denney, Social studies teacher
Seymour High School
Seymour, Missouri
(ddenney@goin.missouri.org)

Political Ice Breaker

I collect a variety of old buttons and bumper stickers from various elections. I select the ones that pertain to the topic I want to discuss and put them in a paper bag. I ask a student to draw one out at a time. Old political buttons can be used to generate discussion on the contributions of political leaders and the ways in which their decisions affect us today. Buttons on health-oriented issues can lead into a discussion on a variety of topics.

Connie Bowler, School nurse
Perry High School
Perry, Ohio
(Bowlerc@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

GETTING ORGANIZED

When people dream of becoming teachers, the last thing they picture is endless paperwork. Yet, as any teacher knows, "administrivia" makes up a significant part of the day (and night). Here are ways to creatively organize paperwork and materials so that you can spend more time doing what's really important.

"Real teachers can eat their lunch in five minutes or less."

Pat Allen

Assignment Notebooks

I use assignment notebooks with daily teacher and parent signatures to help my students turn in homework on a timely basis. I verify that the correct information is written and understood, I touch base with my students every day, and the communication between school and home is enhanced. If the student hates doing this, then the completion of the homework will be rewarded with improved grades and a gradual withdrawal of the signature component. If the student enjoys the process, then perhaps it will be just a useful tool for the student to improve the organizational part of the process.

Ellen Levy
Reading/social studies/language arts teacher
James F. Cooper Middle School
Buffalo Grove, Illinois
(elevy@enc.k12.il.us)

Response Signals

Instead of having students raise their hands to answer questions, I use other signals. Using thumbs up or down, response cards, fingers to signal an answer with choices, or heads up/heads down allows all students to participate in answering questions. This provides a risk-free environment, and students can try to answer all of the questions asked. My class enjoys this activity and it allows me to see all the students' responses instead of just a few.

Emily Hashier, Second grade teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(hashiere@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Homework Teams

I assign daily homework. In order to make it more fun, I separate each class into groups of four or five students to make "spirit teams." I keep a "Team Spirit" bulletin board posted, on which I have

sticker incentive charts for each team. After the homework is graded and recorded each day, the students are allowed to come up and get a sticker for their team and place it on their chart. At the end of each week, the team with the most stickers in each class receives bonus points. At the end of the marking period, the team from each class with the most stickers receives a pizza party. Students work hard to encourage their teammates to complete their homework. I have found this type of positive peer pressure to be quite successful for those students who need some extra motivation to do their homework regularly.

Beverly Mysyk
Seventh and eighth grade math teacher
Perry Middle School
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(MysykB@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Swapped Papers

On the day that my students turn in a major paper, I have a mini-conference with each of them as he or she hands in the paper. I check to see that the paper has all of the required elements. This takes just a minute or two because I skim the paper. As I spot any problems, I tell the student about what I see that could be done better. I tell the students that the paper is in on time and that I will accept it, but they can swap me a corrected copy the next day if they want to fix the things that I noticed that needed correcting. Ninety percent of my students bring in a paper to swap the next day. I love this because they do a rewrite even before I have put a pencil to their papers. When I do grade them, they are easier to correct because the obvious problems are no longer present. The students are happy because their grades are based on the swapped paper, not the one that came in the first day.

Sue Schmitt, English teacher
Antioch Community High School
Antioch, Illinois
(sschmitt@achs.lake.k12.il.us)

Adopt-a-Hallway

To keep our school looking neat and clean, I suggested an "Adopt a Hallway" program. Classes volunteered to police the halls for litter, and our principal posted signs reminding us to "Keep Riverside Beautiful." The volunteering classes will be recognized at the end of the year for their hard work.

Peggy Partridge
Fifth grade learning support teacher
Riverside Beaver County School District
Ellwood City, Pennsylvania
(partridg@usaor.net)

Vomit Comets

I request a container of "Vomit Guard" from our custodian to keep in my classroom cupboard for when one of those inevitable accidents happens. Quick application of the compound makes the room more pleasant to be in and really helps with the clean-up on hard surfaces and carpeted floors. The custodian loves me and class can continue! I also stress to my students that they should never come to tell me that they feel like they are going to throw up. Instead, they should just grab a trashcan. This little suggestion has saved many an accident!

Karla Gilbert, First grade teacher
Pomona Elementary School
Montrose, Colorado
(kgilbert@montrose.net)

Student Heritage

My students speak a variety of languages and come from many different countries and backgrounds. To help them appreciate each other, I have them fill out a form that includes their names in English and their native language, a few phrases in their native language, and some personal information such as their likes and dislikes and how many siblings they have. I put the cards on the bulletin board

outside my room with a photo and a string leading to the place they're from on the world map. This gives the parents something to look at while they're waiting for conferences and helps them get to know something about their child's classmates. It's also a great way of honoring their child's heritage.

Barbara Pollak, ESL teacher
Clark Mills School
Manalapan, New Jersey
(buba6@hotmail.com)

Stopping Late Work

I agonized for years about students turning in late work. Taking off a percentage for each day an assignment was late turned into a nightmare. Now, my students are allowed to turn in one assignment late every grading period, no questions asked. After that, late assignments are not accepted for credit but still need to be completed.

Michael Yeakey, English teacher
Cheraw Middle School
Cheraw, Colorado
(psychling@hotmail.com)

Clean Blackboards

Here is a blackboard tip that eliminates yucky wet cloths and sponges while keeping blackboards looking like new. I take a clean small towel and put a little bit of lemon oil on it. I place the towel in a Ziplock bag and leave it overnight so that the lemon oil soaks into the towel. After I erase the blackboard, I clean it with the towel and it removes all the chalk dust without leaving any streaks. The blackboards look like new. I add a couple of drops of lemon oil from time to time, but there should not be so much that it wets the board.

Marilyn Redmond, Second grade teacher
Roland Michener Public School
Kanata, Ontario, Canada
(rredmond@home.com)

Shaving Cream Clean-Ups

Shaving cream will remove pencil and pen marks from desk tops. I put shaving cream on each child's desk and then we do some form of leaning activity with the cream. For example, I ask students to draw a picture that illustrates a certain fraction or geometric shape, or they write their spelling words. The inexpensive kind of cream works just as well as the expensive kind.

Gail Dacus, Sixth grade teacher
C.T. Walker Magnet School
Augusta, Georgia
(cgdacus@mindspring.com)

Getting Tape Off

To take tape off the back of posters when I take them off the wall, I have the poster laminated before posting. This makes the poster last much longer. I use only wide transparent polypropylene package tape to mount the poster. This type of tape sticks very well, even on painted cinder block walls. The tape should come off the poster easily at the end of the year. If not, I use my other trick of getting tape and labels off things: a hair dryer to warm the tape or label. I pull slowly and keep rewarming the next section.

Jane Stern, French teacher
Wheaton High School
Montgomery County, Maryland
(Jane_Stern@fc.mcps.k12.md.us)

The Paper Shuffle

Here's a technique for allowing kids to try new ideas in a risk-free setting. I have my students write an idea on a paper without putting down their names. Then I ask them to pass their papers around without leaving their seats. The students love the frenzy as the papers are passed from one to another. When I say stop, the students keep the paper that is in

front of them. Then, I call on random students for the answer on their paper. No one is embarrassed even if the answer is off-base because only the author knows who wrote the answer.

Elaine Hostetler, Seventh grade teacher
Lakeland Middle School
LaGrange, Indiana
(ehostetler@tln.net)

Whiteboard Mistakes

Sometimes a marker is grabbed to write on the whiteboard and invariably, it turns out to be a permanent marker. A quick solution is to use the correct type of dry-erase marker to write over the permanent ink. This breaks down the permanent ink and the whole mess wipes away!

Hank Rowe
Eighth grade social studies teacher
Amphitheater Middle School
Tucson, Arizona
(Wurensh@aol.com)

The Right Pen!

With all the activity in our classroom, I became frustrated with finding "the right pen." I use whiteboard pens, Vis-a-Vis, marker pens, etc. So to keep track of what pen is used on which surface, I keep a supply of sticky-back Velcro squares on hand and use them to post the proper pen in the proper place on a portable whiteboard, near my journal chart, etc. It has saved me many headaches! I also use sticky-back hooks to hang charts anywhere there's space!

Janis Higley, First and second grade teacher
Chief Umtuch Primary
Battle Ground, Washington
(danjan@worldaccessnet.com)

Rubric Labels

I use address labels for self-assessing rubrics. I set up a simple 1-5 scale and then list the skills or ideas to be graded for the assignment. For example, a writing assignment rubric might look like this:

1 2 3 4 5 Capitals

1 2 3 4 5 Periods

1 2 3 4 5 Cursive

Students must circle the number that they feel they earned before handing in the assignment. Then I circle the number that I feel they earned when I grade their work. Most of the time we match, but if we are way off, then I know whom I need to work with the next day. The rubrics help students understand how grades are earned and how to focus on specific skills and concepts.

Mary Wells, Fourth grade teacher
Southside Elementary
Cocolalla, Idaho
(wellsfam@nidlink.com),

Box Recycling

I recycle Tide detergent boxes to make portable file boxes or portfolio cases. First, I start out with an empty 16.43 lbs. or 120 wash-load size Tide detergent box. This size is exactly the right size to house Pendaflex hanging file folders and other portfolio covers sized for 8 ½ x 11 inch paper. Next, I cover the box with contact paper and personalize the case with my own decorations. This case is handy for carrying curriculum guides. My students enjoy making these cases to use at home, too.

Carleen Drozda
Family and consumer science teacher
Perry High School
Perry, Ohio
(drozdac@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Your classroom climate has a powerful effect on how well your students learn. Striking a balance between freedom and discipline is a skill that can make all the difference between a well-run classroom and classroom chaos. Here are some techniques educators are using to achieve such a balance.

"Real teachers know 1001 ways to say no and even more ways to say yes."

Daphne O. McLawhorn

Wait Cards

I use numbered cards to organize students who need my individual attention. I laminate the kind of cards made for classroom calendars and put them in order in a basket. When I am busy talking to someone, a student can come up and take a card. They take the cards back to their seats instead of waiting in line. When I finish with one student, I call on the next number and a hand goes up to show me who I will conference with next.

Linda Golomb, Second and third grade teacher,
Cedarcreek School
Valencia, California
(lgolomb@lalc.k12.ca.us)

Seating Charts and Grading

When I make seating charts, I write students' names on sticky notes and place them on a paper with desks drawn on it. Then, I put the chart in a sheet protector. This works very well because students can be moved quickly and easily when their seating assignments don't work. When I need a new arrangement, I don't have to rewrite every name. This also gives me a fast way to record the students' grades. I use an overhead marker on the seating chart and then record their grades in the grade book later.

Amanda Beaudin, Ninth and tenth grade
science and health teacher
Elizabeth High School
Elizabeth, Colorado
(ajbeaudin@hotmail.com)

Pocket Attendance

I quickly take attendance by using a pocket chart. I write each student's name on both sides of a card in two different colors. As the students walk in, they flip their name card over. I know which students are absent because their names are in a different color. Writing the names on both sides in two different

colors eliminates the need for me to switch all the cards over each day because I only need to turn over the cards of those students who were absent. I color code the heading at the top of the chart so that students who can't remember whether or not they switched their name can see what color it's supposed to be.

Karen Reynolds, Vocal music teacher
Tri County High School
DeWitt, Nebraska
(jreynolds@navix.net)

Cooperative Colored Circles

When working with cooperative groups, I keep the noise level under control by using colored circles. If a group is on task and using quiet voices, I give them a green circle. If I need to remind them about the noise level, I give them a yellow circle. If a group is way off task, I give them a red circle and step in to give them assistance. This is a great way to model appropriate behavior when I am just beginning to establish groups and ground rules. It also saves time because I don't have to interrupt the entire class to get one group back on track.

Elaine Wargo, Fourth grade teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(wargoe@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Musical Chimes

Like many teachers, I sometimes have difficulty getting my students' attention. I now use a chime to get the children to settle down. They love the beautiful sound, and it is a way to indirectly teach a little music.

Pamela White, Third grade teacher
Parker Elementary School
Oakland, California
(pj2000@webtv.net)

Velcro Mats

My students sit on the floor for group activities. In the past, I've used mats or carpet squares to designate where they should sit. They are a chore to move and the children continually shift about on them. In searching for a solution, I took colored hook side Velcro, cut it into four-inch strips and wrote each child's name on one. The strips cling to the carpeted floor and can even be vacuumed over. Now the children no longer move about.

Lana Schaefer, Preschool teacher
Mason City Community School District
Mason City, Iowa
(Schaefer@netins.net)

Ouchies

When I started my first year of teaching last year, I discovered it was popular for my fourth graders to go to the nurse's office for a Band-Aid or a spray of Bactine on a hang-nail or paper cut. To curb lost class time and personal frustration, I decided to keep a large bottle of clear aloe on the sink in the back of my classroom, along with a box of cotton swabs. After the students learned how to apply the aloe on their own without leaving or interrupting class, they were quite proud they could take care of the problem without asking for assistance. Their little ouchies also went away in the process!

Stephanie Urlage, Fourth grade teacher
White Hall Elementary School
Richmond, Kentucky
(surlage@madison.k12.ky.us)

Safekeeping Box

Sometimes children bring things from home to play with, which makes it harder for them to pay attention. I decided to resolve this problem by

creating a Safekeeping Box. I found a medium-sized box with a lid, decorated it, and put a label on the box that said "Items in Safekeeping To Be Returned Later." When I see children playing with something that is distracting them, I ask them to put it in the Safekeeping Box and let them know they can retrieve their item at the end of the day. This validates their important personal treasures and assures them that the item will be returned. Additionally, it cuts down on the distractions in the classroom, as the students learn quickly to avoid having things put into the box.

Heather Greenwood
Youth behavior specialist for grades K-5
Sugar Grove Elementary School
Houston, Texas
(hlgreen@wt.net)

Comic Groups

I cut apart comic strips and pass them out to my students. They must walk around the room to find the rest of their comic strip. When they do, they have created a new team. This is an easy way to create groups. The kids think it's fun, so there are no complaints.

Aimee McCracken, Third grade teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(mccrackena@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Say No to Drugs Week

Here are activities for a "Just Say No to Drugs" program our schools hold in October:

1. Have students participate in a Planting of Promises. Ask a local nursery to donate several hundred red tulip bulbs and bulb food. Have the students plant a piece of paper with a promise to be drug free. On top of the paper, plant the bulb and the bulb food. In the spring, there will be a beautiful garden of red tulips to remind the students of the promise they made. Purple crocuses can also be planted among the tulips to spell out the word "NO."

2. Assign each class a tree on the school grounds. Each class must tie a red ribbon around its tree to signify the unity of the student body against drugs.
3. Get the local grocery store to donate paper grocery bags. Have the students decorate them with a "Say No to Drugs" slogan and return them to the grocery store to be used.
4. To celebrate at the end of the week, have the kids wear red and gather for a rally. Decorate with red helium balloons, hand out red licorice sticks, and invite the local police to speak to the kids about drugs. End the event with a red punch and cookie party in the schoolyard.

Michelle Welch, Food service manager
Heritage Junior High School
Bakersfield, California
(Cmmichelew@aol.com)

Karen Lovell, CNP Manager
Virgil I. Grissom High School
Huntsville, Alabama
(klovell@hiwaay.net)

Message Labels

I discovered a wonderful use for the printed address labels that so many companies sell. Instead of ordering labels with addresses, I order labels that contain messages to my students from me! Companies sell six hundred labels in assorted colors for as little as $7.95 plus shipping. Some of the messages that I have devised are: (1) Great job! I'm proud of your effort! (2) Parents: Please sign and return this graded paper. (3) You have just earned bonus points, congratulations! Teachers can customize all kinds of messages for their students. My students love to read what their sticker labels say!

Melanie Finotti, Fourth grade teacher
Keystone Elementary School
Knox, Pennsylvania
(mgfinotti@hotmail.com)

Abused Privileges

It seems that my students constantly want passes. Now each of my students may only have three passes every nine weeks. Each time they use a pass, I mark it on the list next to their name. After their third pass, they need to make up ten minutes of class during their lunch period. This way, if students really do need to "go," they can. But if they just want to roam the halls, they will think twice. I've only had one student opt for the lunchtime payback.

Janet Romo, ESL teacher
McKemy Middle School
Tempe, Arizona
(romo4@earthlink.net)

V for Victory

Rather than yelling at my students to be quiet, I hold up my hand and use the "V" for victory sign. As soon as they see me, they make the signal too until the entire class is quiet. This is as effective in quieting an entire team of students in the auditorium as in the classroom setting.

Raylene Wauda, English teacher
Madison Middle School
Appleton, Wisconsin
(Waudaraylene@aasd.k12.wi.us)

Rules on Video

My drama class is producing a videotape of class rules and behavior. I assign a different rule to a group of two or three students. They have to write, practice, and perform a skit demonstrating appropriate and inappropriate behavior. My drama students are having a great time producing the skits, and the video will be a fun way to review the rules in all of my classes.

Barbara Keihle, Language arts teacher
Nestucca High School
Cloverdale, Oregon
(keihleb@nestucca.k12.or.us)

Discipline Cards

I have green, yellow, and red discipline cards on a chart for each student. At the beginning of the day, each student has a green card showing on the chart. If a child is disruptive, he or she is told to pull the green card as a warning and the yellow card is exposed. After the yellow card is pulled, the child is given a five-minute time out. After the red card is pulled, the child is given a ten-minute time out. If the behavior continues, the child is sent to the school reflection room to talk to the Educational Assistant about how he or she can better handle a situation. Once a reflection sheet is satisfactorily completed, the child may return to class. Few students have to pull more than their green card before remembering to stay on task.

Lolita Cox, Sixth grade teacher
Museum Magnet Elementary School
St. Paul, Minnesota
(LOLITAV@worldnet.att.net)

Documenting Student Behavior

Most of the students I work with demonstrate behavior that is more inappropriate than the typical misbehavior in the regular classroom. It is important for me to keep track of the specific behaviors each student is working on in order to gauge progress or regression. Using Excel to report time, I make graphs to demonstrate each student's achievement. The finished product is useful and looks professional. This has been very helpful in reporting to teachers, parents, and administrators. The students are impressed, too!

Ellen Winer
Special education resource/inclusion teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(winere@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Even if it sometimes seems that you only talk to children, as an educator you interact with a wide range of individuals. Working and communicating well with others can help build a strong network of support both for your students and your own professional growth. It's a win-win situation!

"Real principals clear a path for a child who is carrying a box full of bunnies. Real teachers smile and spread out lots of newspaper and start adjusting lesson plans. Real custodians show up with an extra roll of paper towels and a dustpan. Together, that's a real team."

Elaine Hardman

Open-House Preparations

I had many parents who would ask, "how's my child doing?" and other specific questions during an open house. I wouldn't have enough time to answer these questions during the open house itself, so I would invite the parents to bring their questions to tea on Sunday afternoon after the second or third week of school. We would "play school" so that the parents could get a taste of the curriculum, the teaching techniques, and the daily scheduling. This informative and fun get-together before open house would eliminate confusion and set a positive relationship for the rest of the year.

Brenda Hutchinson
Retired second grade teacher
Oscar Adams Elementary
Gadsden, Alabama
(Ilafrancis@aol.com)

Teacher Yearbooks

To make new teachers feel welcome, we photocopy the teacher pages of the previous year's annual and give them to each new person. Under the pictures, we add first names and nicknames. This really helps new teachers get to know the names of the other staff members quickly, and they tell us it gives them much more confidence their first few days in a school full of strangers.

Alice Kuether
Former 6th grade ESL teacher
Horace Mann and John Muir Middle Schools
Wausau, Wisconsin
(AliceWau@aol.com)

Professional Communication Tool

I purchase blank business cards for the computer to create a professional communication tool to give to parents. On the business cards, I print my name, assignment, school, the school phone number, and E-mail address. I also choose to include my

home phone number and E-mail address on the card. I find that only parents who really need to get in touch with me use my home number. Once the cards are printed, I laminate them and attach a magnet strip to the back so that the card may be kept on the refrigerator for easy access. This goes home with the students on the first day. I've had many parents tell me that they really appreciate having such a handy reference to contact me, and many hang their child's best work with the magnet.

Sally Engle, Third grade teacher
West Liberty Salem Elementary School
West Liberty, Ohio
(salnmike@foryou.net)

School Notes

To communicate easily with parents and students, I post a message on (www.schoolnotes.com). I can list my assignments for the week or direct kids to a favorite Web site. It's easy, fun, and free!

Gay Ramsey, Seventh grade English teacher
Trailridge Middle School
Shawnee Mission, Kansas
(Gayramsey@aol.com)

Displaying Credentials

Lawyers do it. Doctors do it. Educators should do it! No, I'm not talking about making a lot of money! I'm talking about prominently displaying educational degrees and professional certificates. Displaying one's credentials will help you appear professional and legitimate. It's very impressive and reinforces to the public the amount of effort it takes to become a teacher and to maintain certification.

Tom Walters
Instrumental music teacher
Camel's Hump Middle School and
Mount Mansfield Union High School
Jericho, Vermont
(twaltchm@pop.k12.vt.us)

Teacher Appreciation Day

Toward the end of the school year, when the PTA is asking what they can do for teacher appreciation ideas, ask them if they would come in before school starts and put up bulletin board paper for the teachers' bulletin boards. The teachers merely staple the color name to the corner of the bulletin board before they leave in the spring, and their bulletin board background paper is up and ready when they return in the fall.

Charlotte Brandt, First grade teacher
Brookwood Elementary School
Virginia Beach, Virginia
(charbrandt@iname.com)

Baby Books

My class and I decided to create books about child development and literacy for families to take home from the hospital with their new babies. First graders with whom we'd been working created the cover and illustrations. High school students researched and wrote sections on topics like the importance of reading to young children, immunizations, toy selection, and developmental stages. We raised awareness of child development and literacy for new parents, and taught high school students the importance of good parenting. All participating students feel like valuable, contributing members of our community.

Judi Raasch
Family and consumer science teacher
Greenfield High School
Greenfield, Iowa
(jraasch@nod-valley.k12.ia.us)

Reading Calendar

I give each of my students a calendar to be taken home nightly and returned daily. The parents record and initial the title of the story or book their child reads each night. I also note children's

birthdays and important happenings for the month on the calendars. The children look forward to these events, count how many days before they happen, and take note of the dates. The calendar encourages them to read and shows a real-life use. It's also a good school-home link and a reminder of important events.

Harlika O'Balles, second grade teacher
Elizabeth Learning Center
Los Angeles, California
(hoballes@lalc.k12.ca.us)

Class Autobiographies

This tip is something I saw done for a fellow student teacher. The host teacher put together a class autobiographical notebook to give to the student teacher on her first day. The notebook contained a picture of the teacher that was glued to a letter welcoming the student teacher to her classroom and a little about the teacher. The teacher had all of the students do the same. This helped the student teacher quickly put faces and names together. Her first day was a little easier since she felt like she already knew something about each of the students and their teacher before she started.

Claudia Pitchford
Education student, University of Illinois and
Illinois Education Association student program
public relations coordinator
Springfield, Illinois
(w9ebk@warpnet.net)

Daily Helpers

I keep a spreadsheet with the names of all the students for each of my classes organized in alphabetical order on my computer. I use this list to assign daily helpers for each class period. The list is posted next to my assignment board where the helpers post assignments, notes, the date, etc. We rotate through the list throughout the year so everyone gets a chance to run errands and do general odd jobs for

me. I also write my lesson plans on the computer with all kinds of advice for subs, including the names of the daily helpers. I print these out each week so that if I'm gone the sub has all the necessary information at his or her fingertips.

Pam Bales
Seventh and eighth grade math teacher
Mill Creek Valley Junior High School
Paxico, Kansas
(pambales@hotmail.com)

Reflections on the Quarter Past

When report card time approaches, I ask my students, without submitting their names, to reflect and write short notes on what to change, delete, and add to the class. Sometimes students have insights that teachers haven't considered. Their comments help me improve my lessons and teaching techniques as well as see myself through their eyes. This gives my students ownership and gives me some grounding.

Susan Nichols, Science teacher
Russell Middle School
Russell, Kentucky
(snichols@dragg.net)

Teaching Recipes

As a way of keeping track of all the great ideas I see and read about, I have a recipe box labeled with the different aspects of teaching. The labels include bulletin boards, management, organization, educational Web sites, etc. Whenever I have a good idea, I write it on an index card and file it in the appropriate place. The possibilities are endless and I am accumulating quite a few great ideas.

Tara Bigner, Student teacher
Beavis Elementary School
Cincinnati, Ohio
(tara@one.net)

Computer Template

To avoid writing the same substitute instructions every time I am absent, I designed a computer template with details about each class. I add information pertinent to the date I will be gone and print it for the sub. This saves me hours of time. I also keep a generic one in my lesson plan book for days my son is unexpectedly sick. I use this same template concept with field trips.

Susan May, English teacher
Decatur Community
Junior-Senior High School
Oberlin, Kansas

Food Drive

I ask people to donate food, time, or money to their local food bank during the month of May. My students write letters and give formal presentations and speeches in order to motivate people to donate. Several of my students have met with our congressmen, and others have been on the local news. My students and I would like to reach one million participants in this food drive. The limits are the ones we set.

Anthony Fontana
Eighth grade language arts teacher
Heath Jr. High
Greeley, Colorado
(afon@psd.k12.co.us)

Communicating with Technology

Each week my children dictate a summary of our week. I act as recorder and type their words into Microsoft Word. We then add a graphic that applies to the week's highlights. Children are able to view the process because my computer is linked to our classroom television. After printing, a copy is made for each child to take home. We call this activity, "Guess

what we did at school this week?" This is a great recall and summary activity as well as a parent communication tool.

Mary Kohl, Kindergarten teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(kohlm@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Progress and News

Halfway through each grading period, I print out individual progress reports using the E-class program. On the back of the students' reports, I print a classroom newsletter explaining what we're studying, what homework to expect, graphs and data on overall grades, kudos to students, and interesting Web sites. I require the students to have the reports signed and brought back for a grade. Then I put the reports in their portfolios. I call the parents of the students who don't return their reports.

Veronica Foley
Eighth grade language arts teacher
Bay Point Middle School
St. Petersburg, Florida
(VerFoley@cs.com)

Snacks for Subs

I always leave a couple of quarters for the substitute to have a juice, pop, or snack on me. Some days, these subs are called very early in the morning and have long drives ahead of them. This is just one way of saying that I appreciate the effort.

Marcia Chambers, Fourth grade teacher
Winskill School
Lancaster, Wisconsin
(march2@webtv.net)

According to statistics from the American Association of School Administrators, 94 percent of all teachers and superintendents believe that technology has improved student learning. This varies, of course, and is largely dependent on the kinds of training that teachers receive. Sometimes the most effective "training" is advice from peers who have learned through trial and error what works and what doesn't work in the classroom.

"Real teachers can fix a jammed pencil sharpener with a pair of student scissors and can unstick a stapler with a paper clip."

Joanie Wilcox

Weekly E-mail

When I was teaching, I had almost every student's E-mail address and many of their parents' addresses in my computer address book. I would send them an E-mail every Sunday about upcoming quizzes, tests, homework, or in-class activities. The good part is that after the first mailing, they all had each other's E-mail addresses and could help each other over the rough spots. I liked staying in touch with the parents who took the time to respond.

Ellen Newman, recently retired teacher
Cheltenham High School
Wyncote, Pennsylvania
(MIDGT@aol.com)

Storing Floppy Disks

My school has recently gone to computerized card catalogs. This left the old card catalogs without use and sitting in a closet. These card catalogs work perfectly for storing 3 1/2" floppies in the computer lab. Other teachers are grabbing up the rest to use for storage in their classrooms.

Staci Bufkin, Computer educator
Kennedy Montessori Elementary School
Louisville, Kentucky
(AciB@aol.com)

Daily Web Visits

Each morning we have quick presentations from the Internet. The class meteorologists give the first one from (www.wunderground.com). This site gives us our local forecast. Two students record the sunrise and sunset and the length of day on our learning calendar. Other students record the time the moon rose and set along with the moon's phase. We read the maximum and minimum temperatures for the day and the whole class figures out the range. Wind direction and speed are also given on this site. At the end of the week, we graph the results. We also look at the

class historian Web sites at (http://www.history-channel.com/thisday/), (http://www.yahooligans.com/docs/tdih/), and (http://www.nytimes.com/learning/). Certain students are chosen to quiz the class on what's in the news that day. All of these Web sites are bookmarked on our home page, and the students have their Internet accounts set up to come up to this page. Each class historian and meteorologist prints out his or her page to store in a class book. The students can go back and look at the year's weather and history in their spare time.

Jennifer Harper
Third and fourth grade teacher
Cavendish Town Elementary School
Proctorsville, Vermont
(SunMAC1@aol.com)

Keyboarding with Shorts

To encourage my keyboarding students to learn good touch keying and not look at their fingers, I ask them to bring a pair of shorts with an elastic waistband to class. They put the computer keyboard through the elastic and sit it on their desk. They put their hands through the legs and position them correctly on the keyboard. Off they go! They think it's cool, and it encourages good keying technique since they can't see and really have to concentrate on their sense of touch.

Bruce Baker, Business education teacher
Kempsville High School
Virginia Beach, Virginia
(galelookgreat@erols.com)

Cheating and the Internet

High school students are very adept at using copy/paste functions to harvest ideas or entire reports from the Internet and then turn them in as representations of their own original work. Teachers need to be at least as smart as their students. How do you accomplish that? Search engines are your salvation, particularly when you select "phrase search." From the

student report, select a phrase that seems a bit beyond that student's general ability. Type that phrase into a search engine, select "phrase search," and voila: if it was copied in part or in total, you will have the original source. Some multi-search engines I would recommend are (http://www.mamma.com), (http://www.hotbot.com), and (http://www.metacrawler.com). The Internet *is* a valuable resource, but students need to learn the difference between research and plagiarism. It is vital to make it clear to the student that they are *not* to copy/paste without giving credit to the source, just as we do for hard copy materials. The bonus here is that it is so easy to do a reality check if they are abusing the Internet privilege. I avoid emotional arguments by simply running my own copy of their source material and attaching it to the back of their report. If you have done a clear and concise job of explaining in advance what is allowed and what is not tolerated, there will be no scene. Naturally, my students do not know how it is that I am so "smart," but it does give us a more even playing field if the teacher does *not* reveal the source (use of search engines) of this profound insight!

Vicki DeBoer, Biology teacher
Olympia High School
Olympia, Washington
(wannadanc@olywa.net)

Message of the Day

I have my computer connected to my large TV screen. I recently set my screen saver to display one main idea that I want the children to remember for the day. The TV reminds them every minute of our message for the day. For example, I might put "Adjectives Are Describing Words" or "Spelling Test Tomorrow." The children love to watch the colors and the movements. It really helps them to remember things.

Marty Crutcher, Third grade teacher
Love Chapel Elementary School
Erwin, Tennessee
(crutcherm@preferred.com)

Overhead Grids

I used to use overhead grids and do sample graphing directly on the overhead, but I had to constantly clean the transparencies or throw them away. Now I've found out that I can project the overhead on to a green or white board, work directly on the board, and then simply erase the board. I make sure the stand is free from being accidentally bumped by students. This method makes it so easy for students to participate in the graphing.

Linda Steinke, Fifth and sixth grade teacher
Coralwood Adventist Academy
Millet, Alberta, Canada
(tsteinke@tnc.com)

Students Create PowerPoint Presentations

My students create oceanography PowerPoint presentations on the computer. Some of the topics the children have chosen in the past are the Titanic, submarines, hurricanes, the Bermuda Triangle, and famous oceanographers such as Jacques Cousteau. PowerPoint presentations can be done in almost any subject or within any topic of study. Students can put together slides and add graphics, sounds, music, and factual information. Many schools are fortunate enough to have computer labs that make it possible for all of the students to have time to complete their presentations. Students can work in small groups if fewer computers are available.

Bob Bals, Fourth grade teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(balsr@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Searching for Landforms

My students use the Internet to search for information on landforms. They use my Web page to access the worksheet they need to complete. They copy

this worksheet to their own disk and then use my Web page to access good URL addresses. I also teach them how to do a Boolean search in case they can't find any information they want to use from my Web page. The students can also use the desktop encyclopedias to find additional information. Once the children have finished their research and completed their worksheet, they create a 3-D model of their landform. The students share their projects and what they have learned with the rest of the class. Last, my students make a video with Hypermedia to show next year's students how to use my Web page to complete this assignment.

Kathy Gall, Fifth grade teacher
Perry Middle School
Perry, Ohio
(gallk@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Digital Library

I've found that the digital camera is a wonderful classroom tool. Since I use it frequently, I've come up with a solution to scanning through the disks to find just the picture I want. I created a template in Print Shop that shows each picture on the disk. Then I print out the pictures and store them in a loose-leaf binder. I put each page in a vinyl sleeve and put the disk in with it. That way, when we want a particular picture, we can search the notebook instead of the disk. It saves a lot of time.

Barbara Howley
Third and fourth grade looping teacher
Perry Elementary School
Perry, Ohio
(howleyb@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

TV Generation

With today's kids spending more time in front of the TV than ever before, I have decided, "If I can't beat 'em, join 'em." I use my classroom computer to take notes with the students. As I type in the information, it

is projected onto the TV screen. When I would traditionally turn to the chalkboard to write, I now turn to my computer. The kids love it. I can change font, size, bold print, or underline to emphasize important parts of the lesson, and I can change colors to add fun to the task of note taking. Best of all, I can print out these notes when we're done and give them to any students who are having trouble keeping up or any students who were absent and didn't get the notes. The kids are drawn to the TV. Why not use it as a tool for learning?

Marty Charters, Fifth grade teacher
Fairfield Elementary School
Virginia Beach, Virginia
(charters@exis.net)

Enlarged Mousepads

Some students have trouble staying on the mousepad. I purchased a large piece of fleeced mat board from a frame shop in the same color as my computer cart work surface. I glued it to the work surface and sealed the edges to keep it from fraying. All my students find this computer the best to use.

NancyLynn Sharpless
Technology education teacher
Tappan Middle School
Ann Arbor, Michigan
(sharples@aaps.k12.mi.us)

Video Autobiography

Each of my students creates a video autobiography. I've used this activity with all ages from elementary to high school. I use a VCR, TV/monitor, macro camera, and an audio cassette or CD player. All students gather material to include in their videotapes, including photos, awards, dolls/stuffed animals, and other 3-D items. Students organize these materials into a logical sequence. It could be pre-school days, elementary years, life in middle school, etc. The taping procedure includes placing pictures or items under the macro camera and taping them for 3 or 4 seconds.

Afterward, we add music and other audio by dubbing it with the cassette or CD player. We add titles by videotaping hand-drawn or computer-generated hard copies with the macro camera. Schools with more elaborate editing equipment can create more elaborate projects. This is a wonderful activity for students to learn more about their families and for the teacher to get a tremendous insight into students' lives.

Thomas B. Chew, Jr.
Media coordinator/TV production instructor
Perry High School
Perry, Ohio
(chewt@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

Technology Integration

I have developed my own Web site for the use of my chemistry students: (http://www.msdlt.k12.in.us/ChemCentral). I developed tutorials on my local links and also have specific remote links for them to use. To help them further, I have posted the schedule of the week that lists important due dates, dates of labs, homework, etc. In addition, their grades are listed by their student ID. The class notes, presented in *PowerPoint*, are posted online so that if a student is absent or would like to review the notes, he or she can do so. The class policies are clearly defined on another "button." "Cool stuff" also helps to pique their interest. This technological approach has helped both the kids and their parents.

Jan Carroll Weir, Chemistry teacher
and science department chairman
Lawrence Central High School,
Indianapolis, Indiana
(Janweir@aol.com)

Teaching Students To Use E-mail

I show students how to use E-mail using heart chain messages. We discuss how positive thoughts make all of us feel good. I send messages to the students, and they are required to check their

E-mail daily. I pick two students to start the chain and send them the following message: "This heart note is for _____. Please add a special thought about this person to the note and send it on to another student in the class. Please send me a copy of the note, as you will get a check in the gradebook when I receive the copy. Forward this to a student who has not received it yet, but do not forward it to the student you are writing about. If you are the last classmate to receive the message, forward it to me and I will pass it on to the complimented student." These messages have been known to make a student's day! It's an easy way to teach E-mail concepts and make my students feel good at the same time.

Michelle Pearson
K-8 technology teacher
Annunciation School
Denver, Colorado
(kpearl2@aol.com)

Computer Class Organization

A computer lab can get cluttered in a hurry, so I assign a Row Manager each day for each row of computers in the room. At the end of the period, this student is responsible for reminding other students to stay organized. The Row Managers get a small checklist of cleanup items: (1) computers logged off, (2) disks put away, (3) paper off the floor, (4) paper off the computer areas, (5) no books, pens, etc. left out, (6) all chairs pushed in. The Row Manager leaves the checklist at the end of the row so I can take a quick walk down the isles, collect the checklists, and evaluate the cleanup. Students get an extra credit point added to their grade for completing all the items on the list, and I have a neat and organized classroom for the beginning of the next class.

Suz Stockton, Business education teacher
Muscle Shoals High School
Muscle Shoals, Alabama
(Stockton@hiwaay.net)

E-MAIL COMMUNICATIONS

To emphasize the importance of communication, time management, business skills, and follow-through, I send my students E-mail regarding the class daily activities. My E-mails include announcements, lessons, testing schedules, links to interesting Web sites, and our classroom Web page highlights. My students are required to check and answer their E-mail at the beginning and end of each class period as well as keep a file on each correspondence. Sometimes, I randomly send them an E-mail question to answer that turns into a test grade, thus encouraging them to check their E-mail daily. E-mail correspondence also gives absent students a documented record of class activities. Communication skills and documentation of each message are stressed. E-mail communication is a wonderful management tool for the teacher as well as a disciplined learning exercise for the students.

Diane Bennett, Technology teacher
Mt. Juliet High School
Mt. Juliet, Tennessee
(bennettd1@home.com)

TEACHING VOCABULARY WITH POWERPOINT

I use PowerPoint to present new vocabulary in my classroom. The Spanish words and their English equivalents or pictures continuously scroll across the TV monitor during the class period. For example, the Spanish word "el perro" will appear and then five seconds later, the word "dog" and a picture of a dog will appear.

Colleen Blaurock, Spanish teacher
Perry High School
Perry, Ohio
(blaurockc@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)

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